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ABSTRACT

This fact sheet is provided by the 4-C Worker Outreach Project in an effort to increase awareness of day care working conditions in Dane County, Wisconsin. Areas covered in the fact sheet are (1) staff wages and benefits; (2) educational background of day care staff; and (3) staff retention and turnover. Data were obtained from 58 full-day and 37 part-day centers, representing approximately 600 child care workers in the county. The information about wages and benefits may be useful in decision making and career planning, and may serve as a basis for continued discussion of the role staff wages and benefits play in the pursuit of quality child care and in the upgrading of the profession of the early childhood educator. (RH)

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CHILD CARE EMPLOYEES: WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN DANE COUNTY

A SUMMARY FACT SHEET 1986
Community Coordinated Child Care
Worker Outreach Project

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Each year 4-C conducts a survey of all licensed day care centers in Dane County. Information from this survey is distributed to day care directors, city and county day care staff, and many other people in day care support services. Individual day care staff have often not received this information in the past. This fact sheet is being provided by the 4-C Worker Outreach Project in an effort to increase awareness of day care working conditions in the county. Having this information about wages and benefits may be useful in decisionmaking and career planning. This information may also serve as a basis for continued discussion of the role staff wages and benefits play in the pursuit of quality child care and the upgrading of the profession of early childhood educator.

The areas covered in this fact sheet are: Staff Wages and Benefits, Educational Background of Day Care Staff, and Staff Retention and Turnover. Each of these topics has significant impact on the quality of programs offered to children in day care. The training, skills, and experience of day care staff are recognized as essential to quality care for children (Lero and Kyle, 1985).

The data below come from 58 full-day centers and 37 part-day centers, representing approximately 600 child care workers in Dane County.

WAGES

Low wages are responsible for two of the most critical problems facing child care today: high staff turnover and the shortage of experienced staff. Poor compensation results in turnover within programs by forcing trained staff to leave the field in order to earn enough to support their own families. Little economic incentive exists to enable experienced teachers to make a life-long career commitment to early childhood education. And although the level of education of caregivers is higher than the national average, the wages in day care are in the lowest 5% of all workers (Zinser, 1986; Washtenaw AEYC, 1986).

Child Care Staff Hourly Wages:

Full Day	Current Average	Range	Average Starting	Range
Administrators	$7.00/hour	$4.61-13.00/hour	$6.07	$4.00-11.25
Program Directors/ Lead Teacher	6.16	4.04-10.00	5.17	4.00-11.25
Teachers	4.66	3.50- 7.50	4.28	3.35- 7.00
Assistant Teachers	4.02	3.35- 5.25	3.88	3.35- 5.00

Part Day	Current Average	Range	Average Starting	Range
Administrators	$7.33/hour	$3.57-10.00/hour	$6.11	$5.00- 7.50
Program Director/ Lead Teacher	7.67	4.90-15.00	6.53	5.00- 7.50
Teachers	6.69	3.35-10.39	5.92	3.35-10.00
Assistant Teachers	5.06	3.35- 7.33	4.43	3.35- 5.25

These same data can be looked at from the perspective of whether the center has profit or nonprofit status. (Information for this breakdown is only available for full-day centers.)

	Current Average Wage		Range	
Full Day	Profit	Nonprofit	Profit	Nonprofit
Administrators	$6.35	$7.38	$4.61-13.00	$5.00-12.50
Program Directors/Lead Teachers	5.39	6.58	4.00- 8.25	4.50-10.00
Teachers	4.35	4.88	3.50- 6.25	4.00- 7.50
Assistant Teachers	3.88	4.13	3.35- 5.25	3.35- 5.25

	Average Starting Wage		Range	
Full Day	Profit	Nonprofit	Profit	Nonprofit
Administrators	$5.49	$6.31	$4.00-10.00	$4.00-11.25
Program Directors/Lead Teachers	4.46	5.45	3.70- 6.00	3.35-10.00
Teachers	3.87	4.49	3.35- 4.75	3.50- 7.00
Assistant Teachers	3.67	3.99	3.35- 4.00	3.35- 5.00

Working Second Jobs

Because wages in day care are so low, often placing workers below the poverty level, particularly if they are single parents, a large percentage of teachers work second jobs in order to raise their living standard. (The poverty level for a family of two is $7,240.00 per year, the equivalent of $3.48 an hour for a 40-hour work week.) Survey data for Dane County indicate that 17% of the teaching staff at full-day centers and 28% of the teaching staff at part-day centers hold down a second job. There is no information as to how this affects job performance, however it seems safe to assume that working a 10-12 hour day would be an additional stress as well as leaving little time for out-of-school classroom preparation and planning.

BENEFITS

Fringe benefits are a major source of "supplemental" income for most people who work. Because of the low wages made by people working in day care, a good benefit package is particularly important. One reason for the movement of day care teachers from one center to another may be the pursuit of more adequate fringe benefits.

	Percent of Centers Offering Benefits	
	Full-Day Centers	Part-Day Centers
Annual Paid Vacation	91%	28%
avg.# of days	10 days	13 days
Paid Sick Leave	89%	74%
avg.# of days	9 days	9 days
Paid Holidays	91%	62%
avg.# of days	6 1/2 days	7 days
Paid Personal Leave	53%	54%
avg.# of days	6 days	4 days
Health Insurance	73%	36%
% paid by employer	64%	63%
Life Insurance	24%	5%
% paid by employer	95%	(insufficient data)
Paid Breaks	73%	28%
Child Care Provided at no fee or reduced rate for employee	64%	24%
Worker's Compensation	84%	74%
Unemployment Compensation	82%	51%
Social Security	93%	87%

It is important to note that Social Security, Worker's Compensation and Unemployment Compensation are NOT voluntary programs and participation by day care centers is required in most cases. These programs are designed to protect workers. For further information about these protective benefits, call:

Social Security/IRS.....1-800-424-1040
Worker's Compensation Division.....266-1340
Unemployment Compensation Coverage Unit.....266-3179

STAFF EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Recent reports concerning the shortage of well-qualified candidates for staff openings in day care centers does not as yet appear to be as pronounced in Dane County as elsewhere in the country (Phillips and Whitebook, 1986). The national trend shows less trained people entering the field as the more highly trained teachers leave day care for jobs which pay more. It is expected, with public schools beginning to offer programs for younger children and the teacher shortage these schools themselves are experiencing, that this problem will escalate for day care centers across the country. This problem is compounded by the growing need for early childhood programs as more American women enter the work force.

Competition for trained staff will become keen, but the relatively low professional status, low wages and inadequate benefit packages deter many qualified people from entering the field and investing in expensive and lengthy educational preparation. Without a concerted effort to improve the compensation and status issues, child care will not be able to continue to attract and keep top-notch people in the field. The great risk is that this will lead to a demand for lowering of standards for child care personnel, which already threatens to further devalue the child care profession, and provide less and less qualified staff to attempt to meet the needs of young children and their families.

The following table shows the staff educational background data for Dane County full- and part-day centers for 1985 and 1986. The greatest loss of the more highly trained staff appears in the part-day centers, with a 13% change in the number of staff with some college training or more over the past year. The full-day centers reported a higher number of staff had some college or more.

	% of Full-Day Center Staff		% of Part Day Center Staff	
	1985	1986	1985	1986
Some high school work	1%	2%	2%	1%
High school diploma	17%	20%	7%	12%
Some college work	26%	31%	24%	13%
College degree	39%	38%	48%	46%
M.A., M.S or other advanced degree	8%	5%	7%	8%

STAFF RETENTION AND TURNOVER

Staff turnover in day care work is a major problem which affects staff morale, efficient running of programs, and continuity of care given to children. Staff turnover in part-day centers for the period 1985-86 was 25%, an increase over the 1984-85 period when the turnover rate was 20%. Staff turnover in full-day centers for 1986 was 28%, a decrease from last year when the turnover rate was 33%. (Since some centers do not report every year, these figures must be taken as estimates only). The retention of experienced staff continues to be a concern however. In Dane County 58% of the teachers in part-day programs and 70% of the teachers in full-day programs have been at their present center less than 3 years. Of the people who had left a day care center during the last year, 29% found employment outside of center-based care. We do not know that that means they left the early childhood field altogether, however it does represent a significant loss of availability of experienced day care workers to the centers of Dane County.

The profile for staff retention in Dane County centers follows:

	Full-Day	Part-Day
% of staff working 1 year or less	37%	36%
% of staff working 2-3 years	33%	22%
% of staff working more than 3 years	30%	42%

It is interesting to note that the average number of years at a center for directors is 6 years for full-day programs and 8 years for part-day programs. In addition, 28% of the directors of full-day programs and

29% of the directors of part-day programs have been at their center for over 10 years. The stability of center directors is undoubtedly a positive factor in what can be viewed as an overall problem: staff turnover.

DAY CARE WORKER UNION PARTICIPATION

At the time this survey was returned the Wisconsin Childcare Union, District 65, UAW had 4 centers under contract and 5 more involved in contract negotiations. Contact had been established with day care workers at 17 additional centers where interest was shown in union membership. At the centers where union membership had already been established, 67% of the teaching staff had become union members.

Interest in unionizing efforts has increased as day care teachers seek ways to affect change in the working conditions, pay and benefit inequities that hinder their desire to make early childhood work a life-long career on which they can support themselves and their families.

CONCLUSION

Information found in this survey may be used as a tool to help motivate staff and parents to become involved in advocacy for child care teachers. It can also serve as the basis for progressive child care legislation, as the true cost of child care is made public. For many years child care workers, through their low wages, lack of benefits, unpaid hours of overtime, and materials bought out-of-pocket for programs, have subsidized the cost of child care for families. Day care workers and organizations interested in the welfare of children are beginning to address this situation and seek remedies. "It is more important than ever that information about the child care community accurately portray" who the people are who provide this essential service (Phillips and Whitebook, 1986). The first step in that process has been the gathering of information.

Sources

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